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Jonah

an expositional Bible Study

by

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Jonah

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Foreword

These lessons in **Jonah** are compiled from the writings of Dr. Grant C. Richison, and were first published on the Internet beginning in 2001 in the Campus Crusades (Canada) daily online devotional Today's Word.

Dr. Richison is a highly experienced pastor, lecturer, and Christian servant who is dedicated to a lifetime of studying and teaching God's Word. Almost immediately after his salvation he began to desire to teach the Word, and he set about a lifelong program of preparation and ministry.

Dr. Richison has a diploma from Detroit Bible Institute, a bachelor's degree in religious education from William Tyndale College (Detroit), a Masters in Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary, and a doctorate in ministries from Luther Rice Seminary in Jacksonville, Florida.

Dr. Richison has been pastor and senior pastor of Baptist churches from 1965 to 1992. His most recent pastorate was at Grant Memorial Baptist Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, where, over a 20 year period, he had oversight of a ministry that expanded from about 350 to more than 2500 communicants. During the period of his pastorates, Dr. Richison was also a lecturer at Detroit Bible College and Winnipeg Theological Seminary.

From 1993 to 1995, Dr. Richison was Director of Leadership Ministries for Campus Crusade for Christ (Canada). He currently has a world-wide lecture ministry with Campus Crusade.

Dr. Richison is an experienced writer, and he provides materials for three areas on the Internet: Sermon on the Net; Today's Word, and Pastors' Power Points. He has considerable ability to communicate God's Word verse by verse in a relevant, clear, applicable and insightful manner and to communicate vision and establish a philosophy of ministry in the local assembly. .

Dr. Richison has served on the following boards and conferences:

- Lower Michigan Baptist General Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, board member)
 - Great Lakes Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Central Canada Baptist Conference (district of Baptist General Conference, chairman)
 - Child Evangelism Fellowship (Manitoba)
 - Evangelical Fellowship of Canada
 - International Ministries to Israel (Canada)
 - Chairman of Greater Manitoba Sunday School Convention
 - Chairman of Marney Patterson Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
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- Chairman of Terry Winter Evangelistic Crusade (city-wide in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the "Why Campaign" (city-wide evangelistic trust in Winnipeg)
 - Chairman of the Board of Regents of Canadian Baptist Seminary (part of consortium of seminaries on Trinity Western University)
 - Baptist General Conference of Canada (board member)
 - Briarcrest Bible College and Seminary, Moose Jaw, Sask.
 - Electronic Bible Society, Dallas Texas
 - President's Cabinet, Campus Crusade for Christ, Canada

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Introduction

I. AUTHOR

The book of Jonah makes no direct claim to its authorship, although the author may be Jonah himself.

Jonah was written in the third person; some think this indicates that Jonah did not write the book, but Moses and Isaiah wrote in the third person as well.

Jonah's immediate predecessors were Elijah and Elisha; Jonah, Amos and Hosea were contemporary prophets (cf. Hosea 1:1; Amos 1:1); Isaiah immediately followed them.

II. THE PROPHET

Jonah means "dove."

2 Kings 14:25 is the only other OT reference.

The name of Jonah's father, "Amittai," means "truthful."

Jonah is the only prophet on biblical record to have run away from God.

Jonah was a prophet of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Character:

Disobedient, 1:3

Fearful, 1:9

Prayerful in urgency, 2:1

Critical, 4:1

Bitter and resentful, 4:3,8

III. DATE: 793-753 B.C.

Jonah prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of the North (793-753 B.C.), 2 Kg 14:23-25.

Content & form of the book of Jonah is patterned after Elijah & Elisha.

Its position in the Hebrew Canon indicates this date.

The story of Jonah coincides with historical conditions at Nineveh.

Fall of Nineveh (612 B.C.)

IV. PURPOSE: Picture of God's reaching out to the Gentiles

Shows God's grace reaching beyond the boundaries of Israel to a Gentile nation

V. SETTING

Jeroboam II had a successful reign (2 Ki 14:25-28; Amos 6:14).

Assyria was under pressure from the northern kingdom of Urartu. This freed Syria to deal with Israel. By the end of the century the Assyrian Empire would become the strongest military force in the world up to that time, but this was not an issue at the writing of Jonah.

Nineveh:

- was a great city (Lu 24:13) located on the east bank of the Tigris River about 550 miles from the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

- appeared to Jonah as an impregnable fortress with both an outer wall and an inner wall 50 feet wide and 100 feet high.

- measured 90 miles in circumference.

- was founded by Nimrod.

- had a population of 600,000.

- was a garden city and one of the great wonders of the world.

The Assyrians were in temporary decline because of internal dissension, so Jeroboam II seized on the opportunity and increased his territories.

Amos, a contemporary of Jonah, warned of impending judgment on Israel due to religious reversion.

Israel became haughty with ensuing greed, injustice and formal religion.

VI. MESSAGE

Addressed as a rebuke to the Northern Kingdom of the nation Israel

God loves Gentiles and seeks to win them.

VII. AUTHENTICITY

A. External evidence

Very weak

The twelve prophets were known as a unit by the third century B.C. (Ecclus. 49:10) and the second century B.C. (Tobit 14:4,18; Ben Sirach 49:10)

B. Internal evidence

Name "Jonah" (1:1)

2 Ki 14:25

VIII. CHARACTER OF BOOK

The book is greatly maligned by anti-supernaturalism.

Jonah is viewed as myth, legend, parable, allegory and history. There is no adequate reason to regard Jonah as non-historical.

1. The form of the book is clearly historical.
2. Jonah was an actual person.
3. Nineveh was an actual city.
4. Jews regarded Jonah as historical (Josephus Antiquities IX, 10, 2).
5. Christian tradition viewed Jonah as historical.
6. Historical record, 2 Kg 14:26
7. Real kings, nations and places
8. Christ view the book as historical, Mt 12:39-41; Lu 11:29-32. If we reject the book of Jonah as literal, we reject the authenticity of Christ's statement.
9. Archeology dovetails with facts of Jonah.

References to Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25; Mt 12:39-41; Lu 11:39-32

One of four Old Testament prophets referred to by Jesus. The others were Isaiah (Mt 15:7), Elijah (Mt 17:11-12) and Elisha (Lu 4:27).

Four (4) chapters, 48 verses and 1328 words

It is not the prophecy at issue, but the prophet.

There is no prophecy in the book except the prophecy that God will destroy Nineveh.

IX. KEY VERSE: 2:9

X. KEY WORDS: "God prepared"

1. God prepared a great fish, 1:17.
2. God prepared a gourd, 4:6.
3. God prepared a worm, 4:7.
4. God prepared a vehement east wind, 4:8.

XI. THEME: *God's sovereignty in dealing with Jonah and Nineveh*

XII. OUTLINE

THE PIGHEADED PROPHET AND A CHASTENING GOD, 1:4-17

Commission of Jonah, 1:1-2

Rejection of commission by Jonah, 1:3

God's discipline of Jonah, 1:4-17

THE PLIABLE PROPHET AND A DELIVERING GOD, 2:1-3:10

Jonah in need, 2:1-3

Jonah in prayer, 2:4-7

Jonah in repentance, 2:8,9

God's deliverance of Jonah, 2:10

Re-commissioning of Jonah, 3:1-2

Obedience of Jonah, 3:3-4

Conversion of Nineveh, 3:5-10

THE PEEVED PROPHET & A MERCIFUL GOD, 4:1-11

The discontent of Jonah, 4:1-5

The purpose of God rebukes Jonah's discontent, 4:6-11

Jonah 1:1

"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying. . ."

The book of Jonah is about a man who just did not want to go to people who did not know Jehovah. He would expend any energy and offer any excuse, but he did not want to go. Reaching believers in Israel was conceivable to him - but not in Nineveh, a place of Gentiles.

There are two countervailing themes running throughout Jonah:

"But Jonah..." (1:3)

"But the Lord..." (1:4)

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,

The Lord has a special work for Jonah. Jonah received direct revelation about his mission.

Principle: Supernatural things can only be known through supernatural methodology.

Application: People deem fish stories with wariness and skepticism. The fish has the tendency to grow after being caught each time the story is narrated! The truth of Jonah's story is not in doubt because it is God who tells the story.

The book of Jonah is the subject of much ridicule and disdain. This skepticism comes from anti-supernaturalists who cannot fathom the idea of a miracle in their grid of truth. The idea of a great fish swallowing a human being is beyond their system of comprehension. To them, Jonah is legend and myth.

The methodology of naturalism fails at metaphysics (that which is beyond physics). While accepting the validity of science as science within physics, Christianity rejects science as a system for determining truth beyond the natural world. God cannot be known through natural method but only through supernatural methodology.

The Bible operates both within and without the premise of naturalism. The Bible views Jonah as a historical person in 2nd Kings and it views him as the subject of a miracle in the book of Jonah. Jesus took both the person and the miracle as historical and supernatural.

Mt 12: 39 "But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. 40 "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. 41 "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here."

Jesus spoke these words to authenticate His ministry. The Scribes and Pharisees refused to believe His word, demanding a sign. Jesus gave them the sign of Jonah's three days and nights in the belly of the great fish. Jonah's experience was a clear harbinger of Jesus' death and resurrection. This elevates the book of Jonah to a very high rank of authenticity. Those who attack the book of Jonah assault the credibility of Christ.

Jesus would not provide a miracle for the scribes and Pharisees; He did not yield to their demand

for tangible evidence: "If you perform a miracle for us, we will believe." Jesus answered that thesis with, "If you believe in the Word of God, you will see." As Jesus did not condescend to their demands, neither should we. Are you willing to take God at His Word? Or, do you need to establish the Bible by outside proof?

Mt 16: 1 "Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing Him asked that He would show them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said to them, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; 3 "and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times. 4 "A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign shall be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah." And He left them and departed."

1 Co 15: 3 "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures..."

The Bible is authoritative because of its origin. The Word of God does not seek the endorsement of science. It stands first and foremost on its own authority. The Word of God is a higher authority than the word of man; it is the testimony of God to truth. Finite man cannot comprehend infinite truth, so it is of no use to put that option into the hands of man. The Creator cannot delimit Himself to the scale of His puny creatures. God will not stoop to the credulity of His creatures. When it comes to truth, man does not call God to account but God calls man to account.

Jn 5: 24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

Jonah 1:2

Jonah 1: 2 "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."

Arise,

God gave three commands to Jonah: “arise,” “go” and “cry.” This is equivalent to “Get ready,” “get set,” “go.” These were Jonah’s marching orders – win the Ninevites to Jehovah. His only responsibility was to cry against the city.

“Arise” is preparatory work. We cannot go before we “arise.” Evidently Jonah was sitting at ease, taking pleasure in his situation. He had no concern about the Ninevites or anyone else outside of his immediate associations. God challenged him to get up from his lackadaisical life.

go to Nineveh, that great city,

God gave Jonah a commission to “go to Nineveh, that great city.” That will take Jonah out of his comfort zone! All that lounging in luxury is over for him. His only responsibility was to get up and go. God would do the rest. However, he could not see himself going into the situation single-handed.

Nineveh was 550 miles to the Northeast of the northern kingdom of Israel, with a population over 600,000 people. It was the largest city in the world at the time of Jonah. The gardens of Nineveh were considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Its city had 1,500 towers. The walls were 100 feet high. Nineveh was the capital of sin; it was the Paris of antiquity in its day. The Assyrians were a constant threat to Israel, although not an immediate threat at this time. The Assyrians were known for their brutality. Jonah just could not see himself going into that situation single-handed.

and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.”

The Lord wanted Jonah to “cry” against the city: “Do not murmur or purr, but ‘cry out against it.’” The reason was that the wickedness of Nineveh came up “before Him.” Even the king of Nineveh acknowledged this (3:8). Their brutal atrocities were notorious throughout the then-known world. Jonah’s message was not to be wishy-washy; his message was to be one of judgment (3:4). Jonah would have none of this.

Principle: God extends the Great Commission to the church and to individual believers.

Application: The word “go” occurs forty-nine times in the book of Acts. A going church is a

growing church (Ac 8:26,27; 9:10_11; 10:19_20). Each time someone went, it paid off.

A fickle, cowardly and temperamental church will not do the will of God. It will not win a maximum number of people to Christ in its community. It is amazing that God uses the church today in all its fragility.

How long has it been since you rose above your convenience and reached out to someone without Christ? How sold are you on the redeeming grace of Christ? Do you want others to know about it? The day of opportunity will not last forever.

He 9: 27 “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.”

Jonah 1:3

But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.”

This is the only occasion in the Old Testament where a prophet refused to do the will of God. God told Jonah to “go” and he went all right – in the opposite direction. Jonah thought he could win a footrace with the Lord, the omnipresent Lord at that! He will never win that race! God has many agencies at His disposal, such as wind, storm and even a big fish. Jonah will face a harrowing experience because of his rebellion.

The word “but” is a right-about-face word. Jonah saw himself as a square peg in a round hole so he attempted to flee to Tarshish. Tarshish was 2500 miles to the West in the southern tip of Spain. It was a merchant city. Nineveh was 550 miles to the northeast while Spain was 2000 miles to the West. Jonah was willing to go four times as far out of the will of God as he was in the will of God!

He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish;

Jonah had no heart for the lost. He had a cold heart and feet to match so he went to “Joppa,” the present day Jaffa. He may have rationalized his

situation by saying, "It is God's sovereign hand that I found a ship just when I needed it." No doubt Jonah rationalized his sin away.

Principle: We cannot hide from God by rationalizations.

Application: The path of sin is always "down." From Jonah's first step down, every step thereafter was down.

Down, down, down. There is nothing static in the path of defiance to God's will.

As Jonah blinded his eyes to the omnipresence of God, so we blind our minds to God's knowledge of our personal situation. We cannot run from the presence of God.

Ps 139: 7 "Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence?

8 If I ascend into heaven, You are there;

If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there.

9 If I take the wings of the morning,

And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

10 Even there Your hand shall lead me,

And Your right hand shall hold me.

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall fall on me,"

Even the night shall be light about me;

12 Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You,

But the night shines as the day;

The darkness and the light are both alike to You."

so he paid the fare,

Jonah paid full fare for the 2000-mile trip and he did not get a refund, either! They threw him down to Davy Jones's locker! He wasted all that money because he stepped out of the will of God.

Principle: It always costs the believer something to step out of the will of God.

Application: It is expensive to step out of the will of God. There is a cost to it. There is no luxury in backsliding. We cannot afford to do it; it costs too much! It is an expensive way to go.

and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish

Jonah "went down" into the ship. He thought he could hide from the presence of the Lord. Each step he took was spiritual deterioration.

Jonah wanted to "go with" the sea mariners. Later, they were sorry that they took this fellow on board. This rebellious prophet caused the whole ship a lot of headaches.

Tarshish was a merchant port in southern Spain, 2500 miles from Israel. Jonah headed for the far west.

Principle: One believer out of tune with God can cause a work of God to languish.

Application: One believer out of fellowship can cause havoc in the local church. There is nothing more miserable than having a backslider onboard a local church that is attempting to do the work of God. All trouble in local churches comes from people out of fellowship.

from the presence of the LORD

This is the second time we have the phrase "presence of the LORD." The word "presence" is literally face. There was no place Jonah could go to get away from the face of the Lord. "Face" is a metaphor for the personal presence of the Lord. If he ran from the presence of the LORD, where was he going to go? He could not outrun an omnipresent God. He could not escape the long arm of the Lord.

Principle: No one can escape the long arm of God.

Application: Our first parents tried running from the presence of the Lord. Many of us have no appetite or stomach for the will of God. This was true of our first parents and their first child.

Ge 3: 8 "And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden."

Ge 4: 16 "Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden."

Je 23: 24 "'Can anyone hide himself in secret places,

So I shall not see him?’ says the LORD;

‘Do I not fill heaven and earth?’ says the LORD.”

Moses rationalized this way: “I don’t have the right training; I’m not man for the job; I don’t have the right background; I am not eloquent or fluent. We rationalize our rebellion just like Moses. Moses said in effect, “Who am I? I am nobody. I don’t have talent or gifts. Why use me?”

Ex 3: 10-17, “Then Moses said to the LORD, ‘O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.’

So the LORD said to him, ‘Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the LORD?

‘Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.’

But he said, ‘O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send.’

So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: ‘Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well. And look, he is also coming out to meet you. When he sees you, he will be glad in his heart.

‘Now you shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth. And I will be with your mouth and with his mouth, and I will teach you what you shall do.

‘So he shall be your spokesman to the people. And he himself shall be as a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God.

‘And you shall take this rod in your hand, with which you shall do the signs.’”

When a person tries to run from God, he always finds a rationale for rationalizing his sin. He will find a ship ready to depart. The devil will make available circumstances so that he can disobey God. Escapism is a form of sublimation. There is always an answer “over there” but not here.

We will never succeed in running a footrace with the Lord. God has many agencies such as a fish, a storm, and a wind to send harrowing experiences

our way. Jonah bore the scars of his harrowing experience to his grave. If we do the will of God, it will save us a lot of headaches.

Jonah 1:4

“But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea, and there was a mighty tempest on the sea, so that the ship was about to be broken up.”

Now we come to the cost of Jonah’s defiance (1:4-2:10). First, God sends a “great wind” (1:4-16) to retrieve Jonah from his rebellion.

But the LORD sent out a great wind on the sea,

In verse three we had the phrase “But Jonah.”

Now we have “But the Lord.” The first has to do with Jonah’s reaction to the will of God and the second has to do with God’s reaction to a believer out of fellowship. Jonah took his measures and now Jehovah takes His. God always lets man have his way to a certain point. Man proposes but God ultimately disposes.

Jehovah tried to send Jonah but now he sends out a “great wind on the sea.” Literally, the idea of “sent out” is caused to be hurled. He hurled this great wind after Jonah. The wind and the fish obeyed Jehovah but Jonah did not. God graciously did not allow His servant to go about his way without dealing with him. He would not allow Jonah to remain in his rebellion.

God tried to send Jonah but now He sends something after Jonah: He sends a wind, a storm and a fish. Elements of nature obey God but His people do not obey Him.

Ps 135: 7 “He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain; He brings the wind out of His treasures.”

Ps 148: 8 “Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word...”

and there was a mighty tempest on the sea,

God has begun to act. God does not relinquish His sovereignty over nature or His creatures. He is in the business of moving nature itself (Mt 8:23-27; Ac 27:14-20).

so that the ship was about to be broken up

The “mighty tempest” was so violent that it almost caused the ship to break up. God, not the prophet Jonah, is the principal person in the book of Jonah. God always accomplishes His purposes in His timing. God interrupted Jonah’s itinerary in deference to His own.

Principle: God loves His children too much not to discipline them and restore them to fellowship.

Application: God’s discipline is an act of His grace. God never loses sight of those He loves. He kept His eye on Jonah the whole time.

There may be a “but” in our lives, but God has a “but” as well. God’s “but” overruled Jonah’s “but.” Man proposes but God will ultimately dispose.

God has two ways of dealing with us: 1) by blessing our compliance or 2) by regulating our rebellion. It is a lot easier on our side to do God’s will willingly. God has His way of getting our attention. Some of us learn only by the hard way. God will cause some storm to come into our lives if we step out of His will for very long. God always deals with a person’s hard heart. God loves us too much not to discipline us and restore us to fellowship.

He 12: 3-11 “For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;

For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.’

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?

But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect.

Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?

For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

We can trust God even when we cannot trace Him.

Jonah 1:5

“Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.”

Now we turn to the anguish of the Phoenician sailors. The violent storm of judgment on Jonah was about to break up the ship.

Then the mariners were afraid;

The mariners feared for their lives. This was no ordinary storm. Others were in jeopardy because of Jonah’s sin. You would think that his conscience would bother him. No, that was seared.

and every man cried out to his god,

The Phoenician sailors worshiped a number of gods. These crusty sailors went to their gods in prayer; that is how desperate they were!

Principle: Sin is social as well as individual; our personal sin affects others.

Application: Our sin can bring trouble on others. No man sins alone for it always hurts others directly or indirectly. Children pay a price for the sins of their parents. The populace bears ill for the failures of their politicians. God made us communal beings linked interdependently with each other. Our personal acts have social results.

The alcoholic may say, “My alcoholism is my personal business.” His alcoholism affects his family, his work associates and many others. He cannot be an alcoholic in isolation.

and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load.

The sailors sought to lighten the ship by tossing cargo overboard. The ship owner would take a dim view of them sailing into port with no cargo on board! But what good was their cargo if they were going to lose their lives? What did they care about the ship's owner at that point?

Values differ in death. Gold, money, and luxury mean little to you if you are about to lose your life. The mariners did what they could. They lightened the load of the ship but the load was still there - Jonah. There is nothing so heavy as sin.

Ps 38: 4 "For my iniquities have gone over my head;

Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me."

Mt 11: 28-30, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

"For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

Principle: Values differ in death.

Application: Our estimates and evaluations about life change dramatically in our dying hour or in a time of desperation. It is at that time, albeit too late to make a life-long difference, that we often take note of the things of greatest value. In one of Paul's great prayers, he prays that we might have the discernment to put priority on the things of greatest value.

Ph 1: 9-11, "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment

that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,

being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."

The word "approve" means test for approval. The word "excellent" indicates a sense of value, of what is important, of what is vital. We need to have the discernment to separate what is important from what is not important. We should be able to test for approval the things that are the most valuable in life.

None of us operates in life without some scale of values. The question is not whether we have a scale of values; the question is more which scale of values we choose. Do we choose God's highest values or some arbitrary set of temporal values?

Where there is no scale of values, utter confusion follows. If we want to live a flustered life, then we live life without an adequate set of ultimate values. In this situation nothing is of value, nothing of importance. To live life with everything of equal importance is to live life at a trivial level. Lesser things are as important as greater things.

If we chose as our ultimate value to make and save as much money as possible, then we have chosen a lesser value in God's economy. If we chose to put God's glory first no matter how much money we make, then we live by God's scale of values. It is a matter of what comes first. If our main objective is to make money, then we are number one in our values and God is number two. We need to decide what is important.

Do we have God's scale of values? What is the highest item on our scale of values? What is first or most important to us? A good way to measure these questions is to consider our use of time. Answering these things will reveal what is important in our lives. Then we will have a sense of what is vital.

But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep

Jonah was "fast asleep" in the bowels of the ship. This stands in striking contrast to the fear of the Phoenician sailors taking action to save their lives. The sailors were praying but Jonah was asleep! The journey to Joppa was long and fatiguing. Jonah was complacent about his rebellion and about the effects of his sin (i.e., the ship breaking up). He slept through God's judgment. He was in a state of callousness.

Principle: Sin causes spiritual stupor.

Application: Many of us sleep while God's judgment is on our lives. Spiritual deterioration is imperceptible. Sometimes this course is hard to detect. Jonah did not become a coward prophet overnight. It was a gradual process.

Lu 9: 32 "But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully

awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him."

Mt 26: 40-46, "Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, 'What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?

'Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

So He left them, went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

Then He came to His disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

'Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.'"

The covenant was to watch and pray, but Jesus' disciples fell asleep.

Sin is a narcotic. It will put us to sleep spiritually. Slowly creeping sin is a spiritual anesthetic that blunts our spiritual sensitivities. It represses conviction of sin and a dynamic fellowship with God. A spiritual Christian does not excuse his sin but faces it and acknowledges it. This is the first step on the road back to fellowship.

Eph 5: 14 "Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.'"

Rom. 13: 11-14, "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.

The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.

Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."

Jonah 1:6

"So the captain came to him, and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish."

So the captain came to him,

Imagine what a godless character this captain must have been. The irony of a man like this captain challenging Jonah to pray is amazing.

and said to him, "What do you mean, sleeper?

The captain characterizes Jonah as a "sleeper." The captain has to prod Jonah to prayer by calling him lazy.

Arise, call on your God;

The captain is desperate. He wants everyone on board to call on his particular god of the pantheon to save the ship. Jonah does not want to deal with God. He wants to flee from the presence of the Lord. He is not on speaking terms with the Lord.

perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish

Jonah's prayer would not have made any difference. He cannot pray against the will of God.

Principle: God uses unusual agencies to get our attention.

Application: As God used a godless captain to get Jonah's attention, so God uses non-Christians or secular situations to get our interest. God has many agencies at His availability. He can call on a circumstance, a reversal, or an accident to get our attention. Sometimes He sends divine discipline so that we will come back to fellowship with Him.

Jonah 1:7

"And they said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us.' So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah."

And they said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us.'

The ancient mariners wanted to get to the root of the problem so they used an ancient system of

superstition – the casting of lots. They played the lottery way back then! The sailors viewed the crisis as a religious problem. God overruled this pagan superstition by answering the request of the sailors.

The casting of lots seems to be sanctioned by God at times in Scripture and at other times condemned by God (Le. 16:7-10; Josh. 18:6-10; 1 Sa. 14:36-42; Ne. 10:34; Es. 3:7; Pr. 16:33; Ac 1:26). However, there is a big difference between God's system of casting lots and pagan superstition. The only context where God sanctioned the casting of lots was in the pursuit of His will.

Prov. 16: 33 *“The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.”*

So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

The sailors found the culprit by divination – it was the recalcitrant prophet, Jonah. First, they threw the cargo overboard but that did not help. Then they resorted to prayer but that did not get them anywhere either. Finally, they cast lots to determine the object of divine displeasure and they discovered the perpetrator of God's displeasure.

Principle: The casting of lots is not a New Testament methodology for determining God's will.

Application: There is only one situation in the New Testament where people of God used the casting of lots to determine God's will. That is the choosing of Matthias in place of Judas. It is not all that clear as to whether this was in the will of God, for God told them to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit, but Peter jumped the gun.

Acts 1: 26 *“And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”*

Matthias is never again mentioned in the Bible. God did raise up the apostle Paul years later.

Jonah 1:8

“Then they said to him, ‘Please tell us! For whose cause is this trouble upon us? What is your occupation? And where do you come from? What is your country? And of what people are you?’”

Then they said to him, ‘Please tell us!

The sailors interrogated Jonah with five rapid-fire questions. They discovered that they had a runaway prophet on board. Jonah was not only a prophet but he was a disobedient prophet. He was a preacher but he did not like the message. He was a missionary but he did not like the field.

For whose cause is this trouble upon us?

The mariners knew that the whole situation was Jonah's fault.

What is your occupation?

“What do you do for a living Jonah?”

“Well, right now I am out of work! I am a prophet but I haven't prophesied lately! As a matter of fact, I am a rebellious prophet.” The cat was out of the bag. How embarrassing and devastating for Jonah!

And where do you come from?

“What is your home town, Jonah? Do you live in Joppa or in Jerusalem?”

What is your country?

“What is your nationality, Jonah?”

And of what people are you?

“What is your race, Jonah?”

Principle: Honesty is the best policy in dealing in our personal sin and rebellion.

Application: Sometimes we do not confess until we are caught. David did not deal with his sin until Nathan the prophet came to confront David's sin. If we get caught red-handed then we confess; otherwise, we do not deal with the problem.

2 Sam. 12: 1-7, *“Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor.*

“The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds.

‘But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him.

‘And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the

wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.'

So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die!

"And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity.'

Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man!'"

Sometimes our behavior belies our beliefs.

Jonah 1:9

"So he said to them, "I am a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land."

So he said to them,

Jonah replied to the sailors' questions about whom he is and what he stands for with a clear-cut confession.

'I am a Hebrew;

Jonah answered the sailors' question of his race by, "I am a Hebrew" (racial name).

and I fear the LORD,

Jonah claimed to "fear the LORD." I imagine the sailors saying, "You do?!!" The sailors were facing a strange person who claimed to be a prophet but rejected the message of the prophet.

the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land'

Jonah said that he feared the God who made the raging sea that caused the sailors' predicament. He also feared the God who made the "dry land" (where the sailors hoped to land!) Jonah was saying that it was the God who created the sea that was giving them so much trouble: "My God caused this storm." Jonah leveled with the sailors.

Principle: It is futile to hazard our hope on some empty expectation.

Application: We can get ourselves into quite a jam in carnality. We bring great trouble on ourselves by stepping out of fellowship with God. Carnality

will make us miserable, cantankerous and unfruitful.

We can hazard our future on some false hope only to find that that hope is a desperate situation. It falls on an empty expectation.

Jonah 1:10

"Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, 'Why have you done this?' For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them."

Then the men were exceedingly afraid,

Apparently the sailors grasped the seriousness of Jonah's rebellion against God more than Jonah did.

and said to him, "Why have you done this?"

What a "why" this is! Sailors who know not God rebuke a prophet for his rebellion: "What an astonishment this is! What spiritual stupidity!" It does not make sense to rebel against a God who made the sea and the dry land.

For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them

Jonah owned up to his rebellion against the LORD. The sailors caught the full implication of Jonah's rebellion against God.

Principle: Non-Christians have more sense at times than carnal Christians.

Application: At times, non-Christians have more sense than Christians. It is always a great rebuke for non-Christians to show Christians how to live. Non-Christians with common sense can have more sense at times than the carnal Christian with the entire Word of God at his disposal.

God's principle is that Christians should have a higher system of life than non-Christians:

1 Pet. 4:17-19, "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"

Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator."

Jonah 1:11-16

"Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?' –for the sea was growing more tempestuous."

And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me."

Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.

Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, "We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You."

So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.

Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows."

Then they said to him, 'What shall we do to you that the sea may be calm for us?' –for the sea was growing more tempestuous

The sailors asked Jonah for the mind of God on their crisis. They did not want to dump Jonah into the sea. They displayed more compassion for the one man, Jonah, than Jonah himself did for the 600,000 Ninevites.

It was not the mariners' fault that they had a runaway prophet on board: "Why did our ship happen to be in Joppa when Jonah arrived? Why are we so unfortunate? Why couldn't Jonah have found another ship or come at another time?" They probably screened their passengers after this to make sure that they did not have any more renegade prophets on board!

v. 12, And he said to them, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea; then the sea will become calm for you. For I know that this great tempest is because of me."

Jonah came clean about the cause of the raging storm – it was his rebellion against God's will.

v. 13. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to return to land, but they could not, for the sea continued to grow more tempestuous against them.

The sailors tried to save Jonah even in the face of what he told them: "After all, Jonah paid his fare." But it is vain to go against a sovereign God. They tried everything in their power to save the ship and Jonah but the only way they would be saved was to throw Jonah overboard.

v. 14 Therefore they cried out to the LORD and said, "We pray, O LORD, please do not let us perish for this man's life, and do not charge us with innocent blood; for You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You."

The sailors finally came to the realization of the pointlessness of their exertion. They then prayed that the LORD would not hold them responsible for Jonah's death. They did not want to incur God's wrath for killing Jonah. It is interesting that they addressed their prayer to the LORD (Jehovah) and not to a god in the pantheon.

The mariners recognized the sovereignty of God: "You, O LORD, have done as it pleased You." They said in effect, "You characteristically do as you please." They understood the sovereignty of God.

v. 15 So they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea, and the sea ceased from its raging.

What a picture – Jonah sailing through the air into the sea! The will of God became immediately apparent when "the sea ceased from its raging." They got rid of their problem prophet. They threw no life preserver after him! "Good riddance, we don't want him back." However, the Lord was not finished with Jonah yet. This was the first of a number of miracles in the book of Jonah.

v. 16 Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice to the LORD and took vows.

In another contrast, Jonah still disobeyed God and the heathen sailors praised Him. This situation brought them to faith in Jehovah. They learned the uselessness of their own endeavors and turned to God to deliver them. Man, by man's effort, cannot

put himself in right relation to God. Jonah needed to learn this lesson as well.

The two words “feared” and “exceedingly” are literally, “The men feared the LORD with a great fear.” This is an emphatic idea putting importance on the magnitude of their awe of God. This is a strange turn of events – sailors come to God in the context of Jonah’s rebellion. God used Jonah in spite of himself. Genuine believers manifest true faith. They always accept God’s way as best.

Principle: God wants us to be a wing rather than a weight to those around us.

Application: As Jonah was a weight rather than a wing to the sailors of the ship, so we can be a weight to the cause of Christ. A backslider is a curse to those in association with him. If our old nature is in the ascendancy, we do not have a testimony to those around us. We are a curse rather than a blessing. We are a wing to those who come into contact with us. We are a liability, not an asset to others.

Jonah 1:17

“Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”

We come now to the first thing that God “prepared” in the book of Jonah. The idea of “prepared” is appoint, order. God does not relinquish His sovereignty over His creatures so He appointed a fish for His purpose and providence. Sometimes God uses ordinary means for His purposes and sometimes He uses extraordinary means. He could have sent a ship going back to Joppa but He chose a fish.

Da 1: 5 “And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king’s delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of that time they might serve before the king.”

This fish was not a whale but a “great fish.” The fish may have been a specially created fish for the occasion. It was God’s grace to seek out His disobedient prophet and not allow him to remain in rebellion.

And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights

The fish retained Jonah for “three days and three nights.” This is a type of Christ. Christ Himself used it in this way. Christ is the antitype of Jonah in the belly of the fish for three days and nights. The fish brought Jonah back to the coast of Israel and emitted him on the shore.

Principle: We need to recognize and respond to God’s sovereign providences in our lives.

Application: If a dog bites a man, that is not news; but when a man bites a dog, that is news. When a man catches a fish, that is not news; but when a fish catches a man, that is news! Most of us take fish stories with a grain of salt because fishermen tend to exaggerate their exploits. There is a tendency to discount their stories. However, the One who tells this story is God Himself. That automatically excludes exaggeration, for God cannot lie. Moreover, Jesus Himself vouches for the truth of this story in Matthew 12. The story of Jonah illustrates the death and resurrection of Christ. We encroach on the credibility of Christ if we say that Jonah is a myth.

God prepared a particular fish for Jonah at a specific time – He maneuvered the right fish at the right time into position: “Calling fish number 1,509,889; come to longitude 37 degrees, latitude 34 degrees and pick up a renegade prophet.” The fish obeyed! He was at the right latitude and longitude at the right time! This is one of the great fish stories of all time. The fish swallowed him whole, brought him back and emitted him on the shore of Israel. This fish obeyed better than Jonah. I don’t know if Jonah gave the fish indigestion or not! The digestive juices must have been awful for Jonah.

May God grip our hearts in obeying the Great Commission.

Jonah 2:1

“Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish’s belly.”

Now we come to the deliverance of Jonah from the fish’s belly. The experience in the belly of this great fish made a prayer warrior out of Jonah. God put Jonah’s back against the wall before he felt the need to pray. Before he preached to others, he needed to pray. Jonah learned to pray in a different place.

The sailors prayed in 1:6 when Jonah did not pray. It took a harrowing experience to bring Jonah to the point of prayer.

Principle: God uses adversity in our lives to bring us to the point of prayer.

Application: Misfortune makes prayer warriors out of us. God allows adversity to come into our lives so that we will trust Him more. Some of us do not pray until there is an emergency – until someone we love is dying, sick, or sued. God has to put our back against the wall before we pray. Before God uses us, we need to pray. He drives us to our knees before He employs us in His service. We must bathe our concern in prayer.

Urgent prayer does not require long-windedness. When Peter walked on water, he did not pray the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father who art in heaven... blub, blub, blub." If he had prayed that way, he would have drowned. "Now I lay me down to sleep, blub, blub." All he said was "Save me." All we need to do is send up an urgent prayer and the Lord hears us.

Instead of fading under pressure, we call on God's grace.

He 4: 16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Jonah 2:2

And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice."

Verses 2-9 are a prayer. It is a verbatim prayer of Jonah for delivering him from the belly of the great fish.

And he said:

Jonah now prayed to Jehovah in his desperation.

I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction,

This passage shows a change of pace from the rebellious attitude of Jonah in chapter one to an appeal to God's grace.

And He answered me.

God answered Jonah's prayer with a miraculous provision of the fish. God must have had a great purpose for Jonah's life since He provided the fish.

Out of the belly of Sheol I cried,

"Sheol" is equivalent to the word Hades in the New Testament. It is the place of departed spirits. We can translate "Sheol" as grave in this verse. The belly of the fish was a grave.

And You heard my voice.

God delivered Jonah from the belly of the fish. The emphasis in this verse is upon what God did.

Principle: God has a purpose for us as long as we are still alive.

Application: God has a purpose for us as long as we are alive. God may have to discipline us but He still has a purpose for us.

What is Sheol? Sheol is not the same as Hell. Both Sheol and Hades are temporary hells and will be dumped into the Lake of Fire, the permanent Hell.

Re 20: 14 "Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Sheol is not a place where souls sleep. The rich man saw Lazarus afar off (Lu 16). He also saw Abraham and he talked to both of them.

Sheol is divided into two separate compartments: 1) Paradise (the residence for believers) and 2) the place for the lost (Lu 16:25).

Sheol can mean simply the grave. It was used this way of the death of Christ.

Ps 16: 10 "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption."

Ac 2: 29-31, "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

"Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,

"he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was

not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption."

After the resurrection, Jesus brought captives of Hades out from that temporary abode into the permanent presence of God. The Lord evacuated the believing division of Sheol. The lost will remain there until it is dumped into the Lake of Fire.

Jonah 2:3-4

"For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.

Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'" For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas,

This phrase says that Jehovah "cast" Jonah into the deep, yet 1:15 says that the sailors did it. The point is that God used the sailors to cast Jonah into the sea. Jonah recognized that it was not the sailors who did it. It was God's discipline upon his life.

Job 1: 21 "And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.'"

And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me.

Again Jonah acknowledged God's discipline upon him.

Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight;

Jonah viewed himself as banished by God because of his rebellion.

Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.'

Jonah vows that he will again walk with the Lord. At the point of absolute despair, Jonah trusted that God would deliver him. God did deliver him by the fish.

Principle: Vows rarely make any appreciable change in our lives.

Application: Many of us make vows when we find ourselves in deep trouble. We rarely keep them: "If only you get me out of this hospital

whole, I will serve you." How many times have we heard this without anything coming of it?

Jonah 2:5-9

"The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head.

I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God.

"When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple.

"Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy.

But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."

The vegetation of the Mediterranean Sea wrapped around his head.

Jonah went right to the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea.

Jonah thought that this was going to be his burial place.

At the point of Jonah's abject hopelessness and despair, God sent the fish to save Jonah from a watery grave. God is always the God of grace.

Just when Jonah thought that he was going to pass into death, the Lord delivered him from death. Jonah thought that his life was ebbing away.

The "holy temple" here is probably the presence of God in heaven and not the temple in Jerusalem.

Those who worship idols have no hope in a God who can deliver people from a watery grave. This may be a reference to the Phoenician sailors.

Mercy here emphasizes grace. Those who worship anything other than the Lord forsake the source of grace in their lives.

La 3:22, 23 "Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

Rom. 12: 1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

Eph. 2: 4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us..."

Heb. 4: 16 "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

1 Pet. 1: 3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."

Jonah said that his sacrifice would not be an animal sacrifice but the sacrifice of his voice in praise.

This vow may be a promise to do what God told him to do in the first place – to go to Nineveh.

Salvation is of the LORD."

Salvation is wholly of Jehovah. It belongs completely within His camp. No one other than He Himself has a share in bestowing it.

Ps 28: 6 "Blessed be the LORD,

Because He has heard the voice of my supplications!"

Principle: We must remember God's grace and mercy when under God's discipline.

Application: Where did Jonah get the colossal nerve to thank God for deliverance while sitting in the fish's belly? He understood something of the grace and mercy of God. Our privilege of serving the Lord is out of sheer, unadulterated grace. We do not deserve to be used of Him, to make Christ known.

If you are out of fellowship with the Lord and are experiencing His discipline, remember God's grace and mercy. Claim it as your own. God will not reject your claim on His grace.

Jonah 2:10

So the LORD spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah onto dry land."

Jonah cried out "Salvation is of the Lord" so Jehovah sent a fish to deliver him.

So the LORD spoke to the fish,

Jehovah's commands to His irrational creatures are more readily obeyed than His commands to His cogent creatures. The great fish obeyed Jehovah but Jonah did not. Jonah would still be at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea if the great fish had said, "Not me." No, he just fanned his tail, took a deep dive into the Mediterranean Sea, and did the will of God.

The fish knew right where to pick up Jonah and he knew exactly where to put him – on the right continent and in the right country. He could have dropped him off in Italy, Spain or North Africa. The Mediterranean Sea is a couple thousand miles long. God does not relinquish His sovereignty over nature or His creatures.

It must have been damp, dark, dank and clammy inside that fish. There were probably a couple of crabs, a few fish and an octopus in the fish's belly. What a place of discipline!

God directed the fish to deposit Jonah on the coast of Israel after a three-day return journey. The fish disgorged Jonah on dry land. The process of emitting Jonah must not have been very pleasant but he must have delighted to see that dry, solid ground again.

and it vomited Jonah onto dry land

The Lord delivered the sorriest of all prophets and put him back on "dry land." Surprised and stunned, Jonah now sat on the Mediterranean shores of Israel. He could now do the will of God and go to Nineveh. We can almost see the dust fly to Nineveh-- but Jonah did not have all the rebellion out of his spirit yet. That took more than a drowning.

Principle: When we come to the end of ourselves and throw ourselves on the Lord, then He delivers us.

Application: God has committed Himself to work in us until Christ comes again.

Phil. 1: 6 "...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..."

The Lord not only saves us but also keeps us until He ultimately makes us like the Lord Jesus. The Lord not only saves the sinner but He also saves the saint.

Heb. 7: 25 "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

The purpose of all chastening is to make us more useful for the Lord.

Jonah 3:1

"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying..."

While Jonah sat on the shore stunned by his experience, the Lord gave him a second challenge.

Mt 21: 28-31, "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.'

"He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went.

"Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go.

"Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you."

God gave Jonah another commission. This is nothing more than sheer, unadulterated grace. Jonah did not deserve the right to preach to the Ninevites. He did not deserve the right to be the greatest evangelist of the Old Testament. God gave Jonah the same trust before he went AWOL.

Principle: God is open to use us anytime we chose to utilize His grace.

Application: God has a tough time getting the attention of some of us. He has to push, pull and appeal. Sometimes God has to push us with some form of discipline. At other times He pulls us with incentive. At times God reminds us of the true basis of why we serve - His love for us in Christ.

2 Co 5: 14-20, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;

and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation,

that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."

Our past patterns tend to imprison us. We confuse preserving the principles of God's Word with preserving a program. We believe that, because the program ministered to us in the past, we should not change it now. The law of inertia will blunt the work of Christ in our lives. We will remain stuck and immovable. This is involvement without results. We are happy with things as they are. This leaves us in spiritual exhaustion without worthwhile accomplishment.

Church life becomes monotonous and boring because it is routine, regular and similar to running on a treadmill. It is easy to fall into mediocrity. Something that does not demand time and commitment from the people of God is probably not worthwhile. It will dim our vision. Deadness sets in. If God can rescue Jonah from failure, He can rescue us as well. He can rescue our church and our family.

Changing doctrine and changing method are two different things. Some church leaders do not want their church to grow. They launch excuses for maintaining the status quo and resisting the changes necessary to advance the cause of Christ: "It is quality that counts"; "Numbers are not

important"; "I like our church the way it is"; "It will cost too much in time and money." We need to muster the faith necessary to move beyond our comfort zones.

Jonah 3:2

"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you."

God did not change His mind, for He still wanted Jonah to preach the same message. He did not say, "Why didn't you obey my command in the first place?" No, God gave Jonah another chance to serve Him.

Principle: The commission to reach others for the Lord is at the heart of God's purpose for our existence here on earth.

Application: The Great Commission is the climax to the gospels. Jesus considered it His supreme mandate (Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15; Ac 1:8; Jn 20:21). The only command (imperative) in the Great Commission is "make disciples." The Great Commission involves more than evangelism; it also involves discipleship. The decision to receive Christ is the first step.

Mt 28: 18-20, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

'Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

"teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.' Amen."

Jesus also gives three supplemental commands: "Go," "baptize" and "teach." The "go" is the first step. This is why Jonah needed commissioning. "Baptizing" is initial incorporation into the local church. "Teaching" helps people to mature in Christ.

Jonah 3:3

"So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent."

Jonah's obedience was now as striking as his past rebellion. Nineveh was the capital city of the

Assyrian Empire. It was a city of great significance militarily, economically and religiously. Jonah went right into the teeth of the Assyrian Empire with his message from the Lord.

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, a three-day journey in extent.

A "three-day journey" indicates that it took three days to walk around Nineveh. A person can walk about 20 miles a day so that would mean Nineveh was about 60 miles in circumference. Nineveh was the largest city in the world at this time. The city had 1,500 looming towers. There were 120,000 children who could not tell their right hand from their left (4:11).

Principle: God has marching orders for every believer.

Application: The personal element in evangelism is critical for effective evangelism to happen. Someone must say, "I am going to do something about this." Ideas are not enough if they are not clothed in flesh.

Some people feel that God has placed them on the shelf and is through with them. Even churches and Christian organizations get this idea. God can rescue individuals and organizations from shipwreck. He can salvage us. He can move us beyond our holding patterns.

Many of us are unaware that we are dead to the dynamics of God in our lives. This is certainly true with some churches. This is a serious problem to the cause of Christ because they become bound by tradition. They will not let the old ways die. They cannot communicate to non-Christians and they lose relevance to where people are. These churches are unaware that they are dying.

Being used of God flows from the obedience of faith. What mandates does God expect His people to obey so He can grow his church? A mandate is an authoritative command, a directive from a higher authority to a lower one—in other words, marching orders. Have you responded to God's marching orders?

Jonah 3:4

"And Jonah began to enter the city on the first day's walk. Then he cried out and said; "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

Jonah had but one prediction. He proclaimed that message on every street corner. He did not decorate the message; he did not apologize for it. It did not seem possible that he would make a dent in this city known for its savagery, cruelty and hatred for Jews but he preached anyway. Under God's power this preaching produced the greatest harvest of souls anywhere in the Bible. This was one man, no PA system, without any television or radio program.

Principle: One man or woman plus God can do a mighty work.

Application: One man plus God can turn a whole city to God. God will use an unknown, unheard of, unsung person if he or she yields to God.

Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

Nineveh was an unusually corrupt city. Artifacts of clay tablets and the like display an ancient library of great magnitude. The Ninevites' art was full of atrocities, barbarities, savagery and man's inhumanity to man. They also hated the Jews.

Jonah "cried out;" he did not whisper or talk in a low voice; he proclaimed his message clearly.

Jonah was a prophet so we would expect to find prophecy in the book of Jonah. This is the only prophecy in all of Jonah. It is eight words in the English language and five words in the Hebrew. That was his entire sermon and prophecy. However, this prediction did not come to pass. It was a true possibility at the time of prediction and condition. It did not come to pass because Nineveh favorably responded to God. Peter's conversion record of 3000 coming to Christ on Pentecost was a drop in the bucket compared to what happened in Nineveh.

Imagine Jonah coming down the streets of Nineveh after staying inside the fish's belly for three days and nights! The gastric juices must have changed his skin and hair. He was probably an odd-looking creature.

Principle: Grace always precedes judgment.

Application: God always gives a period of grace before judgment. God willingly forgives. He wants to use us no matter what we have done or how many times we did it. God is always willing to

begin again. He delights to restore us to fellowship and to make new use of us. This is sheer grace.

God gives second, third and many chances to serve Him. How have you responded to the challenges of God in your life? Has God had to introduce a dose of discipline in your life?

Jonah 3:5

"So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them."

The city of Nineveh believed God, not Jonah. They came to ready accord with the message of Jehovah that judgment would come to the city in no uncertain terms. Note that they "believed God." This does not say that they believed in Him or on Him but that they rested their case in God. The Hebrew word for "believed" is "Amen." "Amen" means I believe it, so be it.

The people of Jonah's generation repented but the people of Jesus' generation did not repent. A greater than Jonah came but He did not get the same results as Jonah did. It is remarkable that Jonah performed no miracles and did not do the works that Jesus did but he had a greater result than Jesus. Jonah did not raise the dead, heal the sick or give sight to the blind but a whole city turned to God.

Our Lord's comment on this scene is found in Mt 12:39-41 and 16:4f. Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching.

Matt. 12: 38-41, "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.'

But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

'For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

"The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here."

A “fast” is an outside manifestation of an inward attitude. This is proof that they believed in God. The king “proclaimed” this fast or published it so that the entire city would take part in it. A fast is a methodology for focusing on the Lord. It allows those who fast to exclude other issues so that they can give concentrated time to God.

“Sackcloth” is a hair garment. It was harsh and irritated the body. Sackcloth was like burlap of our day. All the politicians, businessmen and military leaders did this. They were not used to doing something like this for they pampered themselves.

Principle: God designed fasting so we could focus on Him.

Application: A fast does not make our prayers more effective. The objective of a fast was to give more time and energy to thinking about God and His purposes for us. It is a time of concentrated prayer.

There is a great deal of difference between the doctrine of prayer in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Prayer in the Old Testament was on a different basis altogether than in the New. No one prayed in Jesus’ name in the Old Testament. Jesus provided a new access to the Father based on sonship. Jesus gained the approbation of God so we do not have to earn it. Fasting was never designed to curry brownie points with God or propitiate His favor. We get God’s ear through Jesus Christ; that is why we come to Him “in Jesus’ name.”

John 16: 24 “Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

Today, we do not have to wear sackcloth and ashes to get God’s attention. We do not have to cut ourselves or undergo some sacrifice. All we have to say is, “Father, I need you. Provide for me and my family.”

Mt 9: 14,15 “Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, ‘why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?’

And Jesus said to them, “Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

Our children should not have to get a half nelson on us to get a meal out of us! They do not have to shave their hair to get our attention and walk around in a burlap bag. No, they do not have to do that because they are family. They rest in our provision. We also rest our case with God. We do not have to argue with Him; we do not have to debate with Him.

It is not part of grace to seek merit by putting on horsehair shirts or burlap bag underwear, sitting on ashes or wearing ashes, going without meals, or giving up limburger cheese, in trying to curry favor with God.

Matt. 6: 16-18, “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.

“But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

“so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Jonah 3:6-9

Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.

And he caused it to be proclaimed and published throughout Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; do not let them eat, or drink water.

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily to God; yes, let every one turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. 9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?”

“Sackcloth” and “ashes” were signs of self-affliction that indicated one’s humility before God. The king of Nineveh traded in his robe for a burlap bag. He traded his throne for an ash heap. He moved from the throne to the city dump. He

was not afraid to be criticized by political contemporaries. Sitting in “ashes” indicates deep mourning and humiliation before God. It is an indication of sorrow for sin.

The “nobles” were the king’s political associates. They included even the city’s animals in this fast! They dressed them in sackcloth.

There were no exceptions to the fast; it involved everyone.

There was to be no delay in believing the message. They were to “turn and relent.” The word “relent” means to sigh, pant or groan and came to mean to exercise pity, have compassion. God pitied the Ninevites. Most of the forty occurrences of this word refer to turning to God from sin.

Principle: Every spiritually minded person needs focus time with the Lord.

Application: It is important to respond in humility to God’s discipline upon our lives. Indifference to it will bring more discipline. It is easy to be obtuse when we are busy and give little focus time to the Lord. That is why it is important to get away to some quiet place and think about our lives in relation to the Lord.

Luke 3: 8,9 “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

“And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Acts 26: 19,20 “Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

“but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.”

2 Cor. 7: 10 “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation (salvation here is salvation from an immoral life), not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”

Jonah 3:10

“Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.”

God took note of the credibility of the Ninevites’ repentance.

that they turned from their evil way;

The Ninevites genuinely faced, acknowledged and turned from their evil way. Their repentance was far more than a token tip of the hat to God.

and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them,

God chose not to bring judgment on the city of Nineveh. God “relented” or repented of bringing catastrophe on the Ninevites. He changed His mind based on the actions of the city. God is always willing to forgive but we should not presume on His forgiveness.

1 Tim. 2: 3 “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

2 Pet. 3: 9 “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”

and He did not do it

God did not bring judgment on Nineveh.

Principle: God cannot change because He is immutable; God changes His actions toward man when man changes toward God.

Application: God is immutable and never changes His mind, so how is it possible that “God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger?”

1 Sam. 15: 29 “And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor relent. For He is not a man, that He should relent.”

Malachi 3: 6 “For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.”

Heb. 13: 8 “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

James 1: 17 "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning."

How could we trust a God who goes back on His word? He knows all things from eternity past. God decreed all from eternity. He knows everything He is going to do. The answer is found in immutability itself. God never changes His mind about truth and character. He always acts consistently with Himself. The repentance of Nineveh did not cause God to change His mind about truth; it caused Him to change His mind about the consequences of His truth. It was man who aligned himself with God and not God aligning Himself with man.

Acts 15: 18 "Known to God from eternity are all His works."

The idea of God repenting is an anthropopathism (an idea about God put in human psychological terms). It is language that accommodates itself to the viewpoint of man. Human repentance is man altering his attitude and actions to God's standard. God's repentance is God reacting to human adjustment to His standards. Man meets God's conditions so God is free to relate to man on God's terms.

God exists uncaused. He is absolute and must exist as He does without change. Any change in God's attributes would make Him less than God. However, immutability does not mean immobility. God can act without the bounds of His conventions. His immutability is not like a stone's inability to respond to changes around it. It is more like a thermostat of mercury that rises and falls with the temperature. The mercury always reflects the temperature accurately. God immutability always acts the same way. He never adapts or accommodates His character to man; man must always accommodate to God. That is why some of God's commands are conditional.

Je 18: 7-10, "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it,

"if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.

"And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it,

"if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it."

God always reacts righteously to the actions of man. Sinfulness on the part of man always produces righteous judgment. Repentance always produces mercy in God. That is the way a mirror reacts to whatever gets in front of it. A mirror acts candidly to whatever it sees.

Num. 23: 19 "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

Jonah 4:1

"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry."

The right-about-face word "but" shows another negative turn by Jonah. God "relented of evil" and Jonah did not like it. Jonah wanted the Ninevites to suffer punishment from God. He was angry with God because God extended grace to the Ninevites.

it displeased Jonah exceedingly,

Jonah reacted negatively to Nineveh's positive response to God (4:1-3). This was a strange preacher. Jehovah called Jonah as a prophet. When God called, he did not want to go. When he went, to his consternation the whole city turned to God. He wanted God to judge Nineveh.

A literal translation of the above phrase might be, "But it was badness to Jonah with great badness." There is great emphasis in the Hebrew here - there is great magnitude of Jonah's displeasure. The word "exceedingly" means great, large in intensity.

and he became angry

Jonah considered Jehovah's conversion of Nineveh to be revolting. The word "angry" means to burn, to grieve, to be hot with anger. We could translate this literally, "It burned to him." Jonah was "hot" over the salvation of Nineveh. It burned him up.

The repetition of the same root word for God's anger and Jonah's anger contrasts the fact that God's anger against Nineveh cooled off and Jonah's anger grew greater.

Someone might have said to Jonah, "Great sermon, Jonah. With only five Hebrew words to your sermon, an entire city turned to Jehovah. Aren't you pleased with such wonderful results?" Jonah was not pleased. He "became angry." Jonah was angry with God! What pleased God displeased his ambassador.

This anger towards God is the first indication that Jonah was still not right with God since his deep-sea dive! Jonah's attitude was wrong. Throughout chapter four, God challenges Jonah's attitude of not understanding the principle of grace. Jonah hated the bloody Ninevites. They had probably killed people close to him.

Now we see Jonah's motivation for running away to Spain in the first place. He did not want the Ninevites to repent; he wanted them to hurt, so he became a fugitive from God.

Principle: Some people feel that they can govern the world better than God.

Application: It is useless to become angry with God. We might enjoy the luxury of anger toward our husband or wife once in a while but if we develop anger toward God, we distort everything. What does it help for a child to quicken anger toward his parents? It does not help.

Jonah wanted mercy for himself but he did not want to extend mercy to the Ninevites. It is a sad thing for people to begrudge mercy to others. Some people reject the idea that God can be good to very evil people. This is a self-centered view of mercy. It usurps God's grace. It delimits God to our view of God.

Those of us who do this cannot accept God's viewpoint; we try to impose our viewpoint on God! This reveals something of a shriveled character and condenses the world around to a very narrow viewpoint. Who are we to say whom God can forgive? Some of us are more passionate about judgment than we are about grace.

Few of us realize what strong an opinion we have about an issue until something arises that touches our bias. It is then that our character shows itself. There is more of Jonah in us than most of us

would like to admit. The state of our soul is despicable and we do not even know it. Some of us cut a sorry figure. We need to face this and deal with it.

Jonah 4:2

"So he prayed to the LORD, and said, 'Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.'"

Jonah now began to plead for himself. This angry prayer was a complaint against God. In registering this complaint, he acknowledged five attributes of God. His view on these attributes was correct but he lamented them.

So he prayed to the LORD,

Jonah prayed – so far so good. When we are angry is a good time to pray (v. 1). He also prayed when he feared for his life (2:1). This word for "prayed" conveys the idea of to intervene, interpose, intercede. Jonah did not pray for Nineveh but for himself.

and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country?"

Jonah said in effect, "I knew you would forgive the Ninevites. I knew something about your gracious nature. I knew you would pardon them. I knew you were softhearted. I knew you would not destroy that bunch of bloodthirsty sinners." This was Jonah's complaint before he tried to flee to Spain.

Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish;

Jonah's prayer reveals why he ran from God. To his credit, Jonah honestly told God why he tried to run from the presence of God.

for I know that You are a gracious

Jonah was angry with God for being Himself. Jonah says five things about God in this verse – all of which were true; God is:

- 1) gracious,
- 2) merciful,
- 3) slow to anger,

- 4) abundant in lovingkindness
5) and One who relents from doing harm.

First, Jonah said that he knew that God was "gracious." The greatest evidence of God's grace is in His dealing with Jonah himself. He was a fickle, bigoted, selfish, temperamental servant of the Lord. We stand in awe of God's grace toward Jonah. God sought Jonah when he fled from the Lord. He disciplined him so that He could use him. He gave Jonah a second commission. But the most astounding demonstration of God's grace is this chapter is where we find the picture of Jonah as a disappointed, disgruntled, fault-finding child of God. He argued with and even criticized God for the way He dealt with the Ninevites.

Principle: God is a giver, even to those who are out of phase with Him.

Application: Grace is what God does for us freely because of Christ. It is God's attitude toward those who violate Him and, therefore, have no claim on Him. God willingly extends His benefits to sinners.

God focuses on grace. He specializes in dispensing grace.

2 Cor. 9: 8 "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work."

Tit. 2: 11 "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men . . ."

Grace is one of God's names:

1 Pet. 5: 10,11 "But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

To Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Our anger toward God should be directed toward ourselves. Jonah's anger was for God being God, for God acting consistently with His attributes! Jonah should have been angry with himself.

and merciful God,

The second description Jonah gave of God is that He is "merciful." God is full of mercy and compassion. The Old Testament always uses this

word for God with one possible exception (2 Chr. 30:9).

Principle: God has great capacity for mercy.

Application: There is no commodity that God has more of than mercy. We extend little mercy to one another. God abundantly exercises mercy toward His creatures.

Mercy is a variety of love. It is a love towards someone who does not deserve our love.

2 Sam. 24: 14 "And David said to Gad, 'I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.'"

Psalm 23: 6 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever."

Psalm 103: 8 "The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy."

Lam. 3: 22,23 "Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not.

They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."

Rom. 12: 1 "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."

2 Cor. 1: 3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort..."

Eph. 2: 4 "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us..."

1 Pet. 1: 3 "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead..."

slow to anger

The third commodity that God possesses is slowness to anger. The word "slow" means long of nostrils. The nose expresses anger through flared

nostrils. God does not get angry quickly. God is longsuffering with us.

Principle: God is longsuffering with us.

Application: Here is one of the many characteristics of God that we should imitate - being slow to anger. The Bible never says that a person should never become angry.

Exo. 34: 6,7 "And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth,

"keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."

Num. 14: 18 "The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation."

Neh. 9: 17 "They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness, And did not forsake them."

Nahum 1: 3 "The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet."

Ps 145: 8 "The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy."

Joel 2:12,13 "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning."

So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm."

There will come a day when God's patience will come to an end. Those who do not know Christ should take special note of this time.

2 Th 1: 8-10, "...in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed."

and abundant in lovingkindness,

God is kind. The English word only approximates the richness of the original word because it includes such ideas as loyalty, devotion and faithfulness. This is God's loyal love to His creatures. Jonah wished that God were not so loyal to the Ninevites. The word "abundant" means great. God is great in lovingkindness.

Principle: God is loyal in His kindness toward us.

Application: God is loyal in His kindness toward His people. This is long-suffering love. God is determined to keep His promises to His people even in the face of their rebellion and sin.

Neh. 9: 17; Psalm 36:7; Psalm 51:1; Isa. 63:7; Tit. 3:4.

One who relents from doing harm

God repents of doing harm toward those who repent. Jonah may have said, "Now you are going to make a liar out of me. You said that you would judge the Ninevites and now you are going to forgive them. I said that you would destroy this city in forty days." Jonah had a reputation to maintain. He did not want to be branded a liar.

Principle: God taps His foot waiting to exercise His grace and mercy toward us.

Application: God is willing to acknowledge that people change. He is ready to begin again with them. Many have a picture of God that does not represent who He truly is. They view Him as an angry Judge who is ready to execute justice without mercy or longsuffering. The biblical picture is just the opposite. God is full of grace and

mercy. He is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness. This is why God is willing to “relent” or “repent” from exercising judgment on us.

Jonah’s problem, and our problem, is that we want to put God in a box. We want Him to fit into our bias. This delimits the God of the Bible.

Jonah 4:3

“Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!”

Jonah was pleased initially to think God was going to destroy the pagans in Nineveh. He wanted God to punish the Ninevites for their atrocities. Jonah did not get his way so he asked God to kill him. He did not want to commit suicide; he wanted God to take his life.

One is surprised that God did not answer Jonah's prayer and destroy him on the spot. But he needed to be taught the value of a human soul.

Principle: Each of us must learn the value of each and every human soul.

Application: Suppose God would have answered your prayers and you would have married that skinny guy you were going with? Look at that nice husband you have now. You would have been stuck with that puny fellow!

God needs to teach each one of us the value of the human soul.

Mt 16: 26 “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

for it is better for me to die than to live!

Jonah was sulking here. Jonah earlier prayed that he might live (2:2). He was concerned about himself, not about Nineveh.

Principle: Sulking is not a good system of communication.

Application: Sulking is never a good mode of operation for dealing with life. It is amazing how many people feel that this is a good system of communication.

Jonah was not the first to want to die. Moses prayed that God would kill him (Ex 32:30f). If

people get too discouraged, they want to die. Elijah wanted to die. He was afraid of Jezebel (1 Kg 19:1). He ran clear across Israel to get away from her. God still has not answered his prayer yet for God took him to heaven without dying!

In one sense it is better to die than to live (Ph 1:21-23). Most of us do not believe this but it is true anyhow. Heaven is better than earth. The reason God keeps us alive is to do His purpose on earth.

Jonah 4:4

“Then the LORD said, ‘Is it right for you to be angry?’”

At this point, the LORD addressed Jonah’s values (4:4-8). God tried to reason with this rebellious prophet. Jonah sulked yet God still sought him. The LORD did not reproach Jonah but compassionately asked him a question that should have stirred him to the true condition of his soul.

Jonah had no entitlement to be angry. He had no right to be angry at what God chose to do with the Ninevites. He did not have reasonable grounds for his bias against the Ninevites.

Notice that Jonah did not answer this question from God. He just went out obtusely to the edge of the city to see if God would judge Nineveh. Jonah was resolved to destroy Nineveh regardless of Jehovah’s question.

Principle: Callousness of soul causes unconcern for others.

Application: God tries compassionately to awaken us to the true condition of our souls. He will not allow our mistaken values to remain unchallenged. This is especially true in our callousness toward those without Christ. Coldness of soul keeps us from reaching out to those without Christ. What is the true condition of your soul about this?

Jonah 4:5

“So Jonah went out of the city and sat on the east side of the city. There he made himself a shelter and sat under it in the shade, till he might see what would become of the city.”

Jonah did not answer God’s question in verse four but made himself a box seat to see the fireworks that he expected God to rain down on Nineveh.

Apparently he had an unobstructed view of the entire city.

While waiting for the doom of Nineveh, Jonah provided for his own personal comfort first and foremost. He defied God further by selfish concern for his personal welfare. What a contrast to the king of Nineveh, sitting in ashes and sackcloth!

Jonah got a good view of the city with its fifteen hundred towers and high walls. Jonah might have said to himself, "Oh, oh, I had better get out of this city. God is going to make this city an ash heap." We see the heart of Jonah. Later in the chapter, we will see the heart of God. Can you see Jonah in his easy chair saying, "Hit them with a thunderbolt! Send an intercontinental ballistic missile to wipe them out!" There is no compassion here, just judgment and condemnation.

Principle: There is no place in spirituality to carry a wounded attitude.

Application: Jonah had a hard heart toward the lost. The sad thing is that our hearts are just as hard as his. We do not want to be disturbed in our lives of comfort. Our hearts are just as hard about the people where we live. Are you extending compassion to anyone now?

How long has it been since you shared Christ with someone?

Are you in the business of giving or providing for your own personal comfort? Many of us get to such a point of self-interest that we sulk. That is what kids do. If they do not get their way, they pout. A big lip protrudes out. Does your husband do that? He just goes over to the couch and lies there like a big glob of grease! Maybe you have a wife like that? The best school in which to learn selflessness is the School of Matrimony. We learn to get along with someone who differs from us. We learn that it does not profit us to pop off with our opinion without giving due consideration to someone else.

Jonah 4:6

"And the LORD God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery. So Jonah was very grateful for the plant."

The word "prepared" is the key word in the book of Jonah. In this case, it was God Himself who prepared this plant. This is a case of God's sovereign provision for Jonah. It was to be an object lesson to help Jonah learn something about the nature of grace and compassion.

God clearly acts in sovereignty throughout the book. There are five things that God "prepared" in the book of Jonah:

1. God prepared a wind, 1:4
2. God prepared a great fish, 1:17
3. God prepared a plant, 4:6
4. God prepared a worm, 4:7
5. God prepared a vehement east wind, 4:8

and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery.

The design of the plant was to provide shade for Jonah in the blazing sun of the near east. Jonah did not water or prune the plant; it was an unadulterated gift of grace from God.

So Jonah was very grateful for the plant.

Jonah went from one extreme to the other. He wanted to die in verse three; now he is "very grateful" for the plant. He was a man of extremes. He was either way up or way down. He was really mad or really glad. He was completely right or completely wrong. There was no in-between with him. Jonah expressed himself very clearly concerning his plant. This is the only place in the book where Jonah articulates any positive emotion.

Principle: Grace is God's way of motivating us to serve Him.

Application: God provides grace even for those out of fellowship. His grace is a motivation for restoration. We do what we do as Christians because we love the Lord Jesus.

2 Cor. 5: 14-16 "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died;

and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer."

People attach themselves to material things. Some love material things more than people.

Jonah 4:7

"But as morning dawned the next day God prepared a worm, and it so damaged the plant that it withered."

God "prepared" a second thing in two verses. We meet this term in verses six, seven, and eight. In the previous verse He prepared a plant to give Jonah shade. Now He prepares a worm to destroy the plant. The worm was to show Jonah where his true values lay.

We can translate the word "prepared" as ordained. God ordained a worm! God ordained a fish in chapter one to save Jonah (1:17), and now he ordains a worm to teach Jonah about his materialistic attitude.

Jonah needed to see the relative value of the temporal and the eternal, the material and the spiritual. He needed to understand something of God's grace and mercy to Nineveh. Jonah was so occupied with his own comfort that he forgot about the spiritual needs of others. The worm destroyed the only thing that Jonah cared for.

Principle: God introduces dissonance into our lives to make us see where our true value lies.

Application: All of us have our blind spots. Although Jonah saw the need for grace in his life, he could not see the need for grace in the Ninevites' lives. That is the same with us. We see the need for grace and mercy in our lives but we find it difficult to extend grace to others.

In order to blast us out of our biases about what is true value, God at times introduces dissonance into our lives. He cares about us too much to let us go on unchecked. The Lord wants us to live at the highest standard of excellence possible.

Jonah 4:8

"And it happened, when the sun arose, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat on Jonah's head, so that he grew

faint. Then he wished death for himself, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

We have the word "prepared" for the third verse running; God prepared a plant, a worm and now "a vehement east wind." God prepared this hot wind to intensify Jonah's discomfort, to show him where his true values lay.

God knows something about meteorology.

Prov. 30: 4 "Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, If you know?"

Jonah may have experienced sunstroke here.

Then he wished death for himself,

Again, for the second time Jonah wished that he was dead. He asked God to kill him in verse three, but that did not work. Children say this sometimes but they do not mean it: "I wish I were dead." This is a faulty appeal to compassion in their parents. It sounds dramatic. Jonah tried to be dramatic with God at this point. Here is a miserable servant of God who thinks he can appeal to a false sense of compassion in God.

and said, "It is better for me to die than to live

Jonah claimed that it was "better" for him to die than to carry on with the knowledge that God did not discipline the Ninevites. He did not know that for sure.

Principle: God puts discord into our lives to show us the true and ultimate value of fellowship with Him.

Application: If our lives are out of harmony with the Lord then we are out of tune and our lives are in discord. We do not have music but noise in our soul. God will make music in our lives if we walk in fellowship with Him.

Sometimes God brings discord into our lives. That may not be pleasant for the moment but God has a blueprint with eternal values. We do not know all the factors as to why God does this; however, there is one thing that we do know - God is too good to do wrong and He is too wise to make a mistake. He will make our Christianity real or He will put us through the ringer. He will strip all

superficiality from us. God will also build us into what He wants us to be for our lives. There is no way that we can sidestep the sovereignty of God.

Jonah 4:9

“Then God said to Jonah, ‘Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?’ And he said, ‘It is right for me to be angry, even to death!’”

God asked Jonah a further penetrating question: “Is it right for you to be angry about the plant?” There is an analogy between Nineveh and the plant. Jonah loved his plant (air conditioner) but he did not love Nineveh. Jonah needed to learn God’s values about things rather than to operate on the premises of his own values.

This time Jonah answered God’s question: “I am justified in my anger about losing that plant to a worm. I deserve the comfort of my air conditioning system! It is enough for me to die!” Here was a man with extremely distorted values. The only thing he cared about was his air conditioning system. Jonah was totally given over to materialism.

Principle: Unrestrained materialism distorts fellowship with God.

Application: Ungoverned materialistic values are brutish to God’s system of things. We want what we want and we could care less about God’s system of values: “God I do not want you fooling with my life. I don’t want you to run my life. I would rather be dead than have you do that. I care about things and not what you care about.”

Jonah 4:10

“But the LORD said, ‘You have had pity on the plant for which you have not labored, nor made it grow, which came up in a night and perished in a night.’”

Now we come to the climax of the book of Jonah.

But the LORD said,

Now God presses the point of the analogy between the plant and Nineveh. God has the last word. Jonah does not speak again.

“You have had pity on the plant

Jonah expressed himself so clearly on his affection for the plant (air conditioning system) that

afforded him comfort. He was attached emotionally to the plant.

for which you have not labored, nor made it grow,

The plant needed no thought, planting, pruning, watering or tending. Jonah put no labor or toil into the plant. God gave him that plant by His sheer grace. Jonah did not merit it or deserve it. The plant came from God, was nurtured by God and was sustained for Jonah. Jonah, therefore, was the subject of pure grace, so why should he begrudge grace to others, even the Ninevites?

Principle: Those who receive God’s grace should extend grace to others.

Application: All of us are the recipients of God’s grace. We do not earn or deserve that grace from God. Grace is something God gives us because of Christ, not because of a religious toe dance. Paul had a good grip on this.

1 Co 15: 10,11 “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”

If God gives us grace with no strings attached, should we not extend the same grace to others? Why begrudge others the grace of God? It is amazing how much duplicity there is in our lives when it comes to this.

which came up in a night and perished in a night

Jonah’s plant (his air conditioning system) came quickly and went away quickly. It was a temporal thing. It was a temporal gift from God given out of unadulterated grace.

Jonah had no “right” (4:4,9) to be angry because he did not earn the right to enjoy the plant. God gave him the plant due to no merit on his part. Jonah then must tacitly acknowledge that the plant was an act of grace on God’s part. He did not earn or deserve it. If Jonah was the recipient of God’s grace, the Ninevites must be afforded that right as well.

Principle: A good perspective on grace puts transitory things in their proper place.

Application: Temporal things are momentary. They are not lasting values. We give great amounts of time to these things, but in the final analysis they are temporal and will not enrich us in time nor continue into the eternal state.

Most of us have a superficial heart for the spiritual needs of people around us. Our vision for those without Christ has dimmed. This is because we have lost our perspective on the grace of God.

Rom. 11: 6 "And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work."

2 Cor. 1: 12 "For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you."

2 Cor. 6: 12 "For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you."

Heb. 12: 28,29 "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

For our God is a consuming fire."

1 Pet. 4: 10,11 "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Jonah 4:11

"And should I not pity Nineveh, that great city, in which are more than one hundred

and twenty thousand persons who cannot discern between their right hand and their left – and much livestock?"

God asked Jonah to take spiritual inventory by a pointed, piercing question. God demonstrated to Jonah what He feels is important. God is a God of compassion ("pity").

God's point to Jonah was this: "Jonah, you care more about your plant (temporal thing) than about the greatest city in the world. You care more about temporal things than eternal things."

The city of Nineveh had 120,000 small children who could not tell the difference between their right hand and their left hand. By extrapolating 120,000 very small children, we must conclude that there were between 600,000 and a million people in the city. That is a lot of people about which to be callous.

God's point about children is something like this: "Jonah, if you don't care about adults, maybe you care about children? Do you even have any compassion for them?"

The book of Jonah closes abruptly. This is intentional because God wants His people to think about eternal things. It is a more forceful conclusion than if He spelled out the implications of the conclusion. It was important for Jonah to learn the relative value of the temporal and eternal, the material and the spiritual.

The book of Jonah concludes on a very powerful note. Here is the implication: "Jonah, if you don't care much about the adults of Nineveh, maybe you care about the children. If you don't care about the children, maybe you care about the cows of Nineveh?" This is pure irony.

Jonah did not answer that question because it is an open question for anyone who reads the book of Jonah. All of us should take inventory of our lives. What do we care about?

Principle: All of us need to take inventory of our compassion for the lost.

Application: Take inventory of your life. Is your chief concern for your house, success, security, health and pleasure?

The reason most people are indifferent to missions is that they are indifferent to the lost anywhere. We are God's representatives on earth today. God

loves the most awful of people. He intends that every generation be evangelized. Many of us are calloused and indifferent to this mission. We have the heart of Jonah. We do not care about the eternal state of people around us. The reason we do not care is that we are too occupied with the "plants" of this life, with material pursuits. There is a tendency to make our churches into country clubs of Christians who enjoy one another but who could care less about those who do not know Christ.

Every time we become indifferent to the lost, God prepares a worm. If we are in bondage to materialism, God sends something to disrupt our covetous idol. It is time to take stock. Do I care

about the lost around me? Do I have my priorities straight?

1 Tim. 2: 3,4 "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior,

who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

2 Pet. 3: 9 "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."
